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Strnad, Jaroslav: *Morphology and Syntax of Old Hindī: Edition and Analysis of One Hundred Kabīr vāṇī Poems from Rājasthān*. Leiden: Brill, 2013, 573 pp., ISBN 978-9-00425-112-0.

The medieval Indian poet Kabir (ca. 15th century) has been a subject of academic study since the Italian Capuchin Marco Della Tomba (1726–1803) wrote “Diversi sistemi della religion dell’Indostano” (1766). Regardless of the impressive amount of scholarship on Kabir during the succeeding three centuries, a large body of materials remain unstudied and one major obstacle remains – the mixture of north Indian dialects used by Kabir. Students of old Hindi have been referring to a number of classical grammatical works like Kellogg’s *A Grammar of the Hindi Language* (1876), Dhirendra Varma’s *La Langue Braj* (1935) to study Kabir. The linguistic inconsistency and variety of Kabir’s language, however, hampers the effectiveness of these works.

The recent publication *Morphology and Syntax of Old Hindī* by Jaroslav Strnad represents a welcome breakthrough in the philological and linguistic study of Kabir. The book consists of three parts. The first part is a critical edition of carefully selected one hundred *pads* that represents the most popular Kabirian *pads* of early 17th century in Rajasthan. The text is based on the manuscript no. 3190, Sañjaya Śarmā Saṅgrahālaya, Jaipur, compiled between 1614 and 1621. The poems belong to the western or Rajasthani recension of the works of Kabir, the tradition most studied by philologists including Śyām Sundar Dās, Mātā Prasād Gupta, Charlotte Vaudeville, Winand Callewaert, etc. Though included in Callewaert’s *The Millennium Kabir Vāṇī* (2000), this manuscript is for the first time critically edited and studied in detail. The second part “Morphology and syntax of the *pads*” is a detailed grammatical analysis of the language used in the *pads* from a morphological perspective. The third part “Morphemicon” is a dictionary, not of words, but of the morphemes, and the way they constitute words. Approaching the language of the corpus innovatively, the author aims at replacing the student’s “brainwork” with the “hard labour on the part of the compiler” (p. 6).

Strnad has successfully compiled a grammar that enables the readers to acquire the grammatical rules in the process of translation by establishing the links among morphemes repeatedly. The approach started by the late Czech Indologist Vladimír Miltner (1933–1997) is different from the conventional grammar by focusing on the “descriptions of particular grammatical morph[eme]s occurring in

the text rather than on paradigms and general rules” (p. 150). In the second part, morphemes of same grammatical functions are grouped together, followed by explicit linguistic explanations based on a mastery of historical linguistic knowledge and solid research on the historical evolution of North Indian languages. One can also choose to use the scientifically composed morphemicon directly to analyse any particular *pad* in the collection word by word and refer to the second part only for further illustration. For instance, the word “kīnhām” can be divided into three morphemes “kī-” (verb “to do”), “-nh-” (perfective participle marker) and “-ām” (case maker of dir.sg.m., dir.pl.m. and other possibilities) and looked up for successively. The possible combination between each morpheme is clearly indicated. Moreover, with a limited number of morphemes, the morphemicon is able to cover a number of variants of the same expression, e.g. “kar-O-y-au”, “kī-O-y-ā” (both as “to do” – perfective marker – inserted consonant – case marker of dir.sg.m.), a phenomenon that has added much burden to the earlier grammars. According to my personal experience, one becomes efficient quickly as familiarity with the morphemes increases. I have also tested the morphemicon on Kabirian pads in other early manuscripts and it turns out to be quite competent. Due to the linguistic diversity, the morphemicon provides multiple choices of nominal cases or verbal forms on some occasions. In such cases, rather than leading to a single solution, the morphemicon helps the reader set the linguistic boundaries within which the translation would be grammatically acceptable. Now computers are able to read unsegmented Sanskrit text such as one online “Sanskrit Reader Companion” (<http://sanskrit.inria.fr/DICO/reader.fr.html>). Given the simplicity of Strnad’s approach as shown above, there is a good prospect that computers can help researchers read old Hindi texts with a database like Strnad’s morphemicon.

Besides its success as a very useful reference book for learning old Hindi, the book also contains a number of insightful and noteworthy reflections on various aspects of the text. The manuscript, though known as *Pañcavāṇī* (lit. “Voices of five”, a collection of poems of five saints, namely Dadu, Namdev, Kabir, Raidas and Hardas), actually consists of three collections of Dadu, Kabir and other poets’ works. Strnad tends to associate the dialectal diversity to the hypothesis that the manuscript is “a product of collecting activity of greater number of singers and scribes” (p. 490). The author also puts forward the notion of “thematic block” to discuss the contents of the poems. Strnad found pads of nāthapanthī inspiration to be the largest clearly defined block of poems, constituting 18.5% of all the pads in the manuscript. The pads containing “general warnings, exhortations, and reflections on the ultimate futility of worldly concerns” (p. 489), for which Kabir is most renowned, is marginally more than this nāthapanthī thematic block. This observation supports the claim to associate Kabir with nāthapanthī influence.

With a careful and valuable edition of the historically popular Kabirian *pads*, inspiring approach and in-depth linguistic analysis, *Morphology and Syntax of Old Hindi* is greatly informative and helpful for the study of Kabir, and old Hindi. The anthology is a specimen of the early Kabirian textual tradition. Together with Strnad's observations about the manuscript compilation, it reveals how the long-lasting textual tradition started. The morphological study approach Kabir's mixed language creatively and accurately, which makes the book most beneficial for those who are seeking an efficient way to study old Hindi and the wisdom behind.